

Stephen Gillett: [00:00](#) Be involved in your community even if you don't think you have the time. But I make the time because the connection around you as a dad, as a father, as a, as a man in society, it's only going to enrich who you are and your other precinct. So if I have a great day at work, I'm usually a better dad at home. I'm usually a better volunteer in the community if I have a bad day at work, like the other suffer as well. So be sensitive and aware that the whole you is not just who you are in any one situation, it's the aggregate of all the experiences

Jon Vroman: [00:29](#) and situations you put yourself in. What's up gentlemen? Welcome to the front row dads. Bodcast if you're brand new here, I'm your host John broom and this is the show for family men with businesses, not businessmen with families. My guest today, I'm super excited about this chat. His name is Stephen Gillett. I was introduced to him by a friend of mine, Zach. Uh, so thanks Zach for the intro here. Uh, Steven, most importantly for this conversation is a father to eight [inaudible]. Has been with his wife for 26 years and when he's not at home, being dad and being a husband and a family man, he is the co founder and former CEO at Chronicle, which is now for that company born out of X, the moonshot factory. It's also an executive advisor to the CEO at Google, but now we can say former, because when this was scheduled he was the CEO, but then it was acquired and things have shifted in the last couple of weeks, months. That's all recent. It's all recent. But Steven, welcome to the show, man. I'm glad you're here.

Stephen Gillett: [01:24](#) Hey Clint, great to be here.

Jon Vroman: [01:26](#) So, well, let's start with something fun here. Did you always know it was going to be eight or was that, did that come as a shock to you?

Stephen Gillett: [01:34](#) You know, so we're high school sweethearts. I'm 43 years old. We've been together 26 years, married for 20 of those. And before that was high school. So it was hard, hard to get married, you know, we had said we would have kids till we were 40 years old. We didn't know if that'd be one or it ended up being seven actually. And so we were done at seven. My three year old, I'm 43 and right about 40 was perfectly timed. I got my new license plate on my truck that says seven kids. We're done. And then maybe I shouldn't tell this in the podcast, but it's a good story that we decided to use an app for birth control and the app is supposed to be just as effective as the other methods. Yeah. So the first month on the app, uh, we as expecting number eight. So I wouldn't left like a nice kid license plate. I have a nine month old at home.

Jon Vroman: [02:35](#) That's amazing. That's so cool. And then since then, what's, what's now your preventative measure? What are you,

Stephen Gillett: [02:43](#) ironically the, the, the last number eight was the first C-section. So we were actually scheduling and what's called a [inaudible] party. And the to party is, you know, a bunch of guys go that want to get, instead of just doing it by yourself with, you know, after watching

Jon Vroman: [03:00](#) a YouTube video, you go with four or five guys.

Stephen Gillett: [03:02](#) They have drinks, they have food, everyone does it together. You recover together. And so we ended up not doing the bras activity party because her stuff fixed at that point.

Jon Vroman: [03:14](#) Mm. Yeah. All right. Wow. Well I'm about to approach that subject, uh, in my life. So we have two, uh, nowhere near your, your crew at all. But I feel like we're, we're probably at the point where we going to be done if we do have more kids. We were, I think we're going to adopt. That's what my wife wants to, wants to explore. Is that possible?

Stephen Gillett: [03:35](#) My only piece of advice is do not watch any YouTube videos before you get the procedure

Jon Vroman: [03:43](#) noted. Uh, that's great. Um, so let, let's, um, I also want to, we're not going to talk about business, but I did want to ask you, with all of your incredible business success that you've had over the years, how has your business world impacted your family life? [inaudible] your bio is amazing. We're not even going to get, we can't even scratch the surface of all that. Interesting things you've done, the places that you've worked, the people that you advise, the companies you've led, but clearly you've been, it's been a really interesting path for you. How has that made you a better dad? What have you taken home from the office?

Stephen Gillett: [04:20](#) You know, I started off my had a family, a small family on business in Oregon and I always felt very connected to my parents by going to work with them on weekends after school, before school in some cases. And so the early experience with my parents really wanted me that really wanted to make sure that as I started to get my own career and my own opportunities that I can somehow in my own way, which is a bit different than a family on restaurant, bring the kids and involve them with me and I never tried to exclude them and really put a firewall between work and home. I always including my family

and everything I can do in business and examples of that are I would bring them traveling with me if I had to go to Europe or the middle East or, or Asia. I'm a subset of the kids with me, coach, they're there, they're athletic team games. I would be the volunteer on the voice gaps as the dental leader. So I always made sure to prioritize

Stephen Gillett: [05:18](#)

high up in my list at the end of it all when I'm taking account of how my life was lived and what I did, I never want him to feel like I had cut them short, didn't give them the attention that they deserve. And then I actually enjoyed doing. And so I think their lives have been enriched by the time my oldest, who's now 17 it was 15 she had been there five or six countries. She had seen and traveled the world. She had been to my corporate offices, the Mexicans at work. We ever bring your kids to work day. We also have to bring your parents to work day, which is actually quite interesting. And if you walked down the halls of uh, X, the moonshot factory, formerly Google X, you'll see on the wall all the way, all the kids signature is all the people that work. Yeah. They get to sign the lobby wall and we still dominate with all the signatures because there's so many of our cubes there. But that's a Testament to the kind of culture that we have and that I participated in as we tried to bring the kids and work and not really keep it firewalled off. It's really when those two different set of experiences.

Jon Vroman: [06:20](#)

Yeah, I'm a huge fan of that concept. One of our pillars are front row dads. We have five pillars that we focus on and one of them is integrated living in this idea of blending things together as much as possible with eight kids. Gosh man. How did you find the time for one to one time or did you find that one to one time? Cause you always hear about how important that is. But I'd imagine if I'm looking at my calendar saying how do we squeeze in one to one time? Yeah. With two kids. And I've had guys who have four kids say, well, it's gotta be so easy with two but it's impossible with four. I've got to go to the guy with eight and say, how did you get it done?

Stephen Gillett: [06:55](#)

Yeah, well you know, I have four daughters, four sons. So we happen to also perfectly match there. It's about the privatization I talked about so I can get home. I usually don't miss dinner. I dropped them off at school in the morning. I have a running story time with the kids. So my, if you ask my 17 year old about these characters and the story, it's almost start tracking in the fact that for 17 year old, 10 11 years, I would tell these stories and then I'd have to continue with the other kids. But in the star Trek sense, if I make one error, like you know,

the princess or the or the night did something that violates the, you know, the ethos of that world, they correct me.

Stephen Gillett:

[07:35](#)

And so I, you know, I tell them stories, I group them up. So it was like, you know, two, three or so at a time. And we'll just go off on these storytelling. But the answer is usually every night or every other night, I take the other ones to school in the morning. Yeah. I go to their sporting events. We divide and conquer. In some cases, I may not make every pony club event, but I do make every basketball or soccer and it works, you know, and the other kids help too. The older kids, it's not just mom and dad doing it, it's the older kids learn. It's very hard to be selfish in a family of eight. And so they also help take care of him and they help us make more time for them. So rather than me doing the dishes or picking up the dog poop or empty the trash, the older kids are doing that while I'm in with the younger kids, giving them that one on one time or that two on one or three on one time. So it's the whole system that tends to work. Not how do I make time for eight one-on-ones or eight individual things, but how does the system make sure that mom and dad get really Epic experiences? Uh, with each of the kids, whether it's mini vacations or it's coming with that work or it's traveling with a small subset that just works.

Jon Vroman:

[08:42](#)

Yeah, I'm sure there's no shortage of stimulus in a house of eight. You know, just like I can imagine like how much energy is in that house? Where do you guys, where have you noticed, where was that a struggle? Where was the biggest stressor in a house full of eight?

Stephen Gillett:

[08:59](#)

You know, it really, it really was the, not so much the house proper, but it was the ancillary when you have four or five kids that want to do sleep overs and then have to have pickups when you have four competing athletic events and a ballet recital, we have three dogs and three cats to run. So add to that that logistics is becoming the issue. Love not attention that it's logistically how do you make all these things happen and how do you make them happen without bringing a deficit to be in parents to those kids, a spouse and being with your, with your significant other. Because it's easy to say we can focus on the kids and the system allows us to spend the time, but we also have to find time for each other as well. And we just happen to make it work. My wife was software engineer is, he has an engineering mindset work outside the home now, but, but she has a, I have an app and the app tells me what I need to do and where I need to go and she's helping to orchestrate the whole, I think her LinkedIn profile is chief logistics officer.

Jon Vroman: [10:09](#) That's awesome. Yeah. So, gosh, so many places that I want to take this conversation. Steven, what do you hope your kids take to their family? Right? Like you're doing this role as father and I get like, yeah, I'm gonna, I'm gonna bet that you're the type of man, just getting to know you a little bit here, that you're like, Hey, they're going to do what they're gonna do. Right. You know, there's a nature versus nurture part, right? They're just, they are who they are, but what do you hope they take away? What traditions do you hope they might, you know, bring in to their families? What do you hope sticks with them that you wanted to intentionally bring to the Gillette crew?

Stephen Gillett: [10:45](#) Well it's interesting cause we, we had about four kids, I think it was mid two thousands I was working, I was at Starbucks at the time. I was there, their chief technology officer, we're in the middle of a big turnaround. The world was kind of against the company. We were working a lot and I remember eating at my desk and you know, lots of, lots of issues you can read about it all in the book. Several chapters for those that are interested [inaudible] and I remember coming across an article on my lunch break when I had a sandwich and some heartburn and the article, I think, I think it was New York times or wall street journal, one of the big newspapers head had released a, not a study, but I sent a results. They were profiling this hundred year old hospice company, their company that takes care of people frankly as they're dying in their home, their kind of final days. And it was like 1909 so it was like a hundred year a report where the hospice group for the first time had released the answers to the same 10 questions they would ask people as they're about to die.

Jon Vroman: [11:49](#) Mmm.

Stephen Gillett: [11:49](#) And I was like, wow, this was entered in the middle of hall. My chaos, this thing hit me. So I opened it up. It was like an interactive website I couldn't find online. It's been more than a decade. I tried looking for it. But you would click on 1948 1990 1912 and you'd be able to see the answers of what people would say. And whether you're in 19 Tamar or 2005 the answers are all the same. The answers are all the same. [inaudible] what do you wish you did more? What do you regret? If you had more time left on earth, what would you, what would you do? And it was never, I wish I had invested more in my fidelity account. It was never, I wish I had become a chief marketing officer or a CEO of a company. It was all the same. The human condition at not change.

Stephen Gillett: [12:36](#) I wish I reached back to with a spouse or a sibling that I was distressed from. I wish I reconnected with my faith. I wish I traveled more. I wish I spent more time or had another kid and the answers are the same that a hundred years and that hit me like a brick. Wow. The human condition hasn't changed and therefore, even though I had a natural inclination to do that, I wanted to reemphasize the fact that when I'm asked those 10 questions, you know, am I even going to answer those in a genuine and authentic way? And that stamps your question the long way, which is I want my kids to be able to answer those as well. I say in the book, the biggest gift that your mom and I can give you, is it wealth or access or a privileged upbringing as each other?

Stephen Gillett: [13:24](#) How do you go through your lives with or without us long term where you can rely and be and be loved and care for each other and therefore from those concentric circles out, good relationship with her caring and deep and meaningful. So at the end of those life journeys, you can also answer those questions in a way that you're proud of and kind of regret. And that's right. That's how I hope and pray my kids should, should have, if some financial security or some access or some max education helps, it should be in service of those values. No. Yeah. Yeah. That's a great answer man. Thank you so much for that. When you think about your upbringing, Steven, and the things that you brought from your childhood, did you grow up in the States? Cause I know your family is from Lebanon, right? Yeah, so I did.

Stephen Gillett: [14:18](#) So I was born in Los Angeles. My dad emigrated or immigrated to the U S when he was 18. In the late 1960s. Met my mom, who is a California Venice surfer girl. And I was raised in Los Angeles, Oregon. Uh, and uh, spent my twenties in San Francisco, my thirties in Seattle. So I'm a West coast kid. And, uh, and it was an interesting plan which I talked about in that book too, is you know, of being in this immigrant household led by my dad who was English was his third language and my mom was this all American surfer girl from Bennett. And uh, and that was a nice kind of duality to my personality, which was I think I inherited and an honor and a lot of the old world traditions that my dad brought about hard work. You know, I remember as my career started to take off, he said, you know, be nice to the people you meet on the way up cause you need them all the way back down. And my mom who used to umpire our little league games, cause her brother was on my, my uncle was a minor league baseball player. [inaudible] one of the only moms if ever I've ever seen where the umpire big black and call him

plays and argue with parents. Right. That's quite a, a duality to grow up.

Jon Vroman: [15:32](#) Hmm. That's interesting. I know you just mentioned like honesty and hard work. What other values do you think did you take from that experience? You know, or maybe maybe another way of saying it would be, what did you want to replicate the most and what did you also see that was like a warning, like a, I don't want ever want to do that.

Stephen Gillett: [15:50](#) Even my parents went through a very, we went through it. I was a teenager at the time, went through a very traumatic kind of collapse when my dad who had used his whole world, no values to do a handshake agreement with the business owner. We bought that small business from and that business owner decided to [inaudible] use antiques and deception to kind of claim the business back after my parents had made it so successful and to watch the ensuing collapse family, um, business. Not the family itself or the business as they went from having good upper middle class lifestyle too. You know, government assistance and all the cars repossessed the most living in, you know, a very poor part of the city and it's watching, have a family unit survived that which never was at risk and stayed close. But the trauma and the emotional trauma, the vulnerability and the insecurity period of my life and their life, uh, introduced.

Stephen Gillett: [16:48](#) Well something that I committed to never want him to have to go through myself. And so that really set me apart. I think doing strength and fortitude and grit to make sure that I know he recovered from that. But then for the next 25 plus years, uh, made sure that my family and my situation never had to go through those kinds of experiences, uh, with them. In fact, I was in Oregon last week with both of my parents talking about this and while they were surprised I put some of those elements into the book. They really acknowledged that there's no 2020 Steven and those two people are connected and who I was and what I went through and what I experienced shape and define the person that the leader, the father, the husband, the dad, the community member that I am today, and you can't just look at Steven Gillette and 2020 and say, wow that you've done all these interesting things. You have to understand that story. I understand that life because it wasn't all rainbows and sunshine. It was a lot of adversity and the about how you overcome that adversity that allows you to have a glimpse into the person.

- Jon Vroman: [17:56](#) [inaudible] you know we talked about the book a couple of times. I'll link to it in the show notes, front row dads.com I want everybody to check it out. What can you share the title one time though so people can do this. It's called from Simi Valley to Silicon Valley.
- Stephen Gillett: [18:09](#) That was a story of hard work, serendipity and questing question being a reference to my gaming profile.
- Jon Vroman: [18:14](#) Yeah. Well you know, interestingly I was talking with you and I shared a quick chat about this too. You know how when I wrote the front row factor book, I really wrote this primarily for my kids and secondarily as an honor to the charity, front row foundation. I know you did the same where you had approached this book as a gift to your kids, you know, and then and then decided are you actually, your publisher was like, we should share this with the rest of the world. Right? There's some good ideas in here and I think it's really awesome. So first thing I want to say to that is I want to encourage anybody who might be listening into this, that this idea of putting your story somewhere in an organized fashion for your kids I think is a really good idea. I don't think it's for everybody, but I think it's something that everybody can consider and our mutual friends down there at scribe can help people to do that.
- Jon Vroman: [19:04](#) I get no affiliation for saying that I just a fan of what they do. And uh, and also I know Philip McKernan, one of our friends who's just on the show by the way, has been doing some great stuff. He's got, you know, this one last talk and this one last book concept and I think it's great for us to be thinking about that as dad's like what do we share with our kids? What, what story do we want them to know and how are we going to present that to them? Cause you do it lots of different ways. There's lots of ways to have a journal, right? Or pass along information. My question to you Steven is that when you did that process, maybe this helps somebody else in their process doing it. How did you decide what to share and what not to share? Cause I w I'm asking the self, I wrestled with this a little bit like how honest do I really be because there's like, I want to be honest, but then do I really need to put that one in there? Like that really helped me become who I am. But is that going to serve? Did you wrestle with that at all?
- Stephen Gillett: [19:54](#) I did in particular with some of the more adversity or adverse experience I have in the corporate world. So do I really talked about the meeting I had with the CEO, you know, people in businesses that I worked for for many years and so I had to find a nice balance between,

- Jon Vroman: [20:12](#) yeah, through the lens of I want my kids when they were the oldest of 17 the youngest is nine months
- Stephen Gillett: [20:17](#) when they're our age in their forties or 50s or 60s and they have their families and their lives when they're reading this, and I may be long gone by then. How did they understand, wow, I want to read about dad's or grandpa's chapter zero to 43 and that was really the tiebreaker. Every time I encountered something in my mind that was who that really want to put that in there? Or is that too much information or do I risk illegal retaliate? I don't know what it would be, but that became very clear when I was, you know, I didn't have to talk about and stuff. That's just sensational. They're the primary, the purpose of this book is not economical in nature. It's really about a story. And so that became very clear when I just use that focus of at first my son or my daughter or my grandson or my granddaughter and many of your firm are reading this.
- Stephen Gillett: [21:08](#) It was a story relevant for the whole purpose of writing the book and with that clarity it became quite easy to remove those conflicts. Yeah, yeah. You know, on the traveling down this road a little bit more about being honest with your kids, how do you approach getting connected to them? You know, at the different stages and ages of life I get like you know it's age appropriate, you have to kind of know your child and but how do you determine like how honest to be? This is really relevant for me too as I was talking to my sister earlier today about how honest we can be with our kids. Like at what point, if you use curse words in your adult life, when might you choose to use curse words with your kids? But some people are like, I don't curse ever. So it's not an issue, but, but sometimes, you know, we were in this debate about, Hey, sometimes we lose the respect of our kids because you just talking to them like they're so young and they're, they're having these conversations with their friends and learning about things in the world that you know, we're still wanting to make them, you know, seven years old and they're not.
- Stephen Gillett: [22:10](#) How do you balance that? How directly to be or how honest to be and how to connect with them in a one-to-one setting, not just through the book. Yeah. From the connection that was interesting. Unexpected benefits of my life is I became quite a prolific gamer, which means I'm pretty hip and cool even to my kids when it comes to game. And in fact I talk in the book about, I'll share this one story. There's a ritual in our family. When you turn eight years old up until eight, you're pretty much protected from all this gaming and tech stuff. Once you turn, I pull you in to the office at home. Uh, and you get, you get several things.

You get an upgrade, you get to create your own gaming account, whether it's on blizzard or Battlenet or whatever.

Stephen Gillett:

[22:58](#)

You get to come with dad to the East scoring of which are the big, you know, gaming tournaments, usually only Anaheim in Los Angeles. You get to join the family Gildan clan that we have running, whether it's in mobile games or online games, depending on where, and you kinda, you kind of become one of the, one of the members. And so literally the East, is it a big deal? Our family, we've gone every year for the last decade, my couple drew circumstance, but I've tried to be religious about it. I pulled them out of school to do it, which means it's a big deal. We drive in the small car, which was the minivan, uh, down to Los Angeles. We spent three days in this case BlizzCon which formed the big East sporting events, 50,000 people days. We live in a hotel, we eat it, food trucks, and we gain until 11 o'clock at night.

Stephen Gillett:

[23:51](#)

We drive back and they get to go back to school. And so at the end of it all, that's where we talk about things. We've talked about the game, we talked about the dangers of the Dawn line in digital world. We talked about why profanity filters are important. Core filters are important to make it and this ritualistic, which means all the kids love it. Paul, one of my kids on the podcast right now and say, what are you most looking forward to in 2020 with the family? I guarantee all of them would say BlizzCon in November. And the experience around that, that's food trucks to staying up late, to get pulled out of school for a couple of days and the, and the road trip. And so I use gaming. Uh, I'm the only dad I know of in my community where they see the 15, 16 year old boys are actually asking me to join their discord server so I can go with them. I'm usually better than most of them and they want me to help them, Karen and Matt. So I use gaming in my current construct is a way to connect to them and teach them about the world [inaudible] about community, see some about profanity and Gore and then, and it's through the medium that they're comfortable and I think I've been able to uh, to do that quite successfully.

Jon Vroman:

[25:02](#)

That's cool man. All right guys, I want to take just a quick second to talk about something really important now and know you're listening to the show because you want to level up your game at home, but if you want to take the next step within front row dads, I want you to do something today, which is text the words front row dads to three one, four, six, six, five one seven, six, seven three separate words. Front row dads. It's not case sensitive. I want to send you a few things right away. First, I

want to send you a recording from a masterclass that I recorded with my good friend and author of the miracle morning. Howe L rod is a father of two amazing human beings and we recorded a show called the five habits of a front row. Dad, I want to send that to you because I think it is well worth listening to.

Jon Vroman:

[25:42](#)

Second, I want to give you 45 minutes of a mindblowing conversation that I had with a woman named Kim and NAMI and the show is titled have better sex, hugely popular. This will rock your world and likely your spouses as well, but I want you to have access to this information. Number three, I want to give you access to 1300 other front row dads inside of our Facebook group where you can ask any question, share any win, and give any resource that you think would be valuable to the community. And lastly, I want to include you in one email I send out each week. It's short, it's to the point. And I pull from my life experiences along with the insights for more than 135 members of our brotherhood. I want to give you the best of the best in each email. So all you have to do is just text the words front row dads to (314) 665-1767 and we will get you started today. So wired, I recognized you as an innovative Guild master in the world of Warcraft. What does that, yeah, talking

Stephen Gillett:

[26:44](#)

about that, the books and what happened was, um, I have, I used to be an it support guy. I had my day job and I would to make extra money in San Francisco, which was expensive to live in. I would work on the side is like an it guy for hire. And one of the guys I was supporting, dr John Seely Brown, who's quite infamous, uh, is a legend in Silicon Valley and in the Bay area and in the tech world. I was it support guy. And one day he came over to my house in San Francisco too. He had two laptops. He wanted him to move his data for one laptop. This was before the cloud revolution. And I said, yeah, come on in, have a seat. And he's on my couch office downstairs. Well, I'm on a huge world of Warcraft raid. This was probably 2040 2004 and or maybe a little bit later.

Stephen Gillett:

[27:34](#)

And he, he's sitting on the couch, he's also a trained social scientist. He's got a couple of PhDs. He used to run Xerox parks. He's very in tune with the world around him. And I said, yeah, let me finish this raid and then I'll help you with your laptop. And he puts his laptop down. He comes and stands over my shoulder and he's like, no, no, no. What about the laptop? Tell me what you're doing. Because I have all these screams going on the stats. I'm probably 2024, 25 years old. And uh, and I explained to him we're doing this raid, we've been trying on it for months or more and to have some particular assignment, blah, blah, blah. And he's fascinated with the whole concept of

this online massively multiplayer world that was so then he proceeds to learn everything you can about it. He partners with a professor from USC, uh, university of Southern California.

Stephen Gillett: [28:23](#) They do kind of a study on Guild masters and the online world and all the lessons learned and these digital realms and they come out jointly with the article you just met mentioned, I think the subject was you play world of Warcraft, you're hired. And he talks about not only my acting in the game but why this is a frontier for people and kids at the time, young adults to learn new and enhanced skill sets that would ultimately contribute to their success in the business. And from that point on 2007, 2008 I, you know, I started putting my guild on my game and experiences on my resume. You know, people would get my resume would say level 60 human Paladin and list all my achievements. And that was, I was very proud of. And frankly, if you're a hiring manager and didn't know what that was, I probably didn't want to work with you anyway.

Stephen Gillett: [29:16](#) But I got unbelievable amounts of recognition and job offers as a result of that. And that was kind of an important catalyst. Uh, queer Ascension, which is the questing part of the title of my book. Yeah. Interesting. So how much do you play now? Like how many hours a week would you say that you're with a controller in your hand? Most of it's PC gaming with a family. We have six or seven, you know, gaming, computer set up around the house. All the game is tied to chores and activities. So if you want to earn gaming, if the dog poops outside and that gives you an hour of games, you'll see six kids pulled out.

Stephen Gillett: [29:56](#) So you tired. Then there's apps and tech. I used to do that, but we do probably an hour, a day. Hour, yeah. Weekends, Friday and Saturday we do probably two or three hours together. Uh, and Sunday's usually a break. So when you, when you bring this up, maybe you don't bring this out, but I'm imagining that like other parents know this about you and your family. Uh, this seems to be well noted at least. And what pushback do you get? What questions do you get? Cause I can run through the whole gamut. Like does violent video games cause violence and kids and like you know, what about them moving as much that their bodies and like the led lights and you know there's all these challenges. I certainly see the benefits too and I'm not trying to ask a loaded question per se. I'm really genuinely interested in how do you handle that conversation with other people or, or maybe you don't maybe just say it's our deal and yeah, it's just our deal.

Stephen Gillett: [30:55](#) I get a whole range of questions. One is, Oh, after they get over the shot, when those asked what kind of car do you drive for? First question, how do you get tall? People are, once we get past that and then a fast, if I'm a devout Catholic or Mormon, nothing wrong with either of those. That's usually the second question I get asked. And then the third question is how do you manage your kids' screen time and your kid's gaming time? Yeah. And the first question I asked them is, when was the last character you created?

Stephen Gillett: [31:25](#) And you know, I use it as a notion of when it comes to screen time and gaming, it's harder to be curious. It's easier to be furious. And so people get mad, they try to, you know, get mad at their kids screen time. And I still do that once in a while, so I'm not immune to that. And they get mad at the YouTube, they get mad at the discord, they get mad at playing fortnight or Overwatch or Minecraft. And I say, why don't you create a character in Fortnite? Why don't you create a character or Minecraft? Why don't you create a character in Overwatch and see what these, what these worlds are all about. See what the, the draw is [inaudible] almost to 100% none of them have ever created and been a part of the world these kids want to be a part of.

Stephen Gillett: [32:08](#) And so my first thing is before you get furious, curious, I understand what it is that's driving kind of attention into these worlds and even if you're clumsy, get in there yourself and experience it. And what I do is I try to use, of course I'm an it guy by training, so I have a lot of instrumentation, how much time they were on discord over time. They were on Instagram, how much time they watch YouTube, how much time they played, uh, Overwatch or four, nine. And it prints, it sends an email to mom and I every week with each kid that plays, here's your dashboard, the dashboard, how much time you spent in the beginning, they were unhealthy levels of use. Once the kids saw that and I sat with them and said, Hey, like I wouldn't work with an employee or a project. Let's go over line by line how much time that you're spending doing this stuff and using the, the analytics inside of these games and inside of the technology or iPhone and the Android and Microsoft and all the network gear you have at home, Comcast, if you have some semblance of technical activity, you can put together a pretty nice report.

Stephen Gillett: [33:12](#) And if you stepped out with your kids after you yourself have created a presence in the virtual world that said, you know, is this healthy and is this sustainable? Most of not all of our older kids corrected themselves or like, wow, I was spending six hours on Instagram a day. That's not, that's not right. And so using the

analytics built into these platforms, being curious and creating their presence in the world and then sitting down together as a family or a one on one or two on one, Hey, let's, let's kinda cocreate a solution here. It was acceptable and sustainable. Healthy. Your kids are smarter than you may give them credit for. They corrected themselves. Oh, that's, that's really cool. Was there a specific tool, app service that you use to track all that? Oh, there's a couple that you can pull together. I think one of the really interesting ones is a product that Disney bought called Disney circle. [inaudible]. That is one that creates profiles by each kid, their pictures, you put it on your wifi network or your home network, and with some configuration works, Apple has screen time, which generates nice reports. Uh, Android has family link, Microsoft family. It's really, and then if you have Comcast or your carrier, usually there's one there. It's, how do you synthesize it all into a readable report that requires a little bit of it worked. In fact, I've done so much. Every time somebody sees that and they said, why don't you start a company?

Stephen Gillett:

[34:36](#)

I was just thinking the same thing. I was like, is this your next business? That's fun. Yeah, I can help you link some of those. What are your thoughts about the violet part of it? The, the war element, the fighting element, that part of gaming versus like a racing game or a, I'm solving a puzzle. How do you, how do you think through those elements of battle? Yeah, for me it's, it's very much like watching movies. So if we're going to watch Braveheart, you know what's going on and why. I probably wouldn't let the seven year old watch Braveheart, right. Very similar to gaming. So we'll play more cartoon by a Minecraft and some Overwatch and Oh, the Overwatch can have some violence in it. You know, I explained to them part of that ritual, part of them watching us understand those elements so they're not going to go from being seven and two, you know, Diablo or far cry or something, you know, adult oriented or older team.

Stephen Gillett:

[35:36](#)

And we onboard to that. And when we encounter, one of the biggest things, if something game violence is the personal chat violence, you know, it's the discord. Four people will say very profane things inside the chat. And you know, my seven year old, hi. Right. They want to have to have that under control. We don't want them to join in voice chat with strangers. We just say, well they can only join voice chat with the family permutations and configurations that you can configure it in these worlds to make it more approachable for young kids. That's where I talked about being curious to join in yourself or Overwatch character. Go under settings, look at the profanity and adult content filter. You can pretty, you can lock that down

like young when you turn eight you can only do play against AI. You can't play against real people.

Stephen Gillett: [36:27](#) Yeah. You know, things like that. And the artifact AI is artificial intelligence where you can play, I have the same experience your older siblings are having or have them join you or have me join you. But we're planning against AI, not against actual people that can be unpredictable. And so all the steps along the way, I use it as a coaching or a teaching opportunity to prepare them. After you get my 17 or 16 year old in the room, they pretty much are unfettered at this point. They can go anywhere they want. So you seem to have a lot of developed thoughts around this, which is great, right? You've got opinions about it. You've got tools and resources and guidelines and you understand age appropriate material for your family. Did you just get there by just [inaudible] being in it and coming up with your own thoughts or are there communities where you go where you're learning and reading and exploring this as I would imagine there's like, like me, there's somebody who doesn't spend a lot of time in this space.

Stephen Gillett: [37:23](#) Here's what you're saying. I'm like, damn, Steven's really got a lot of great thoughts around this. Where on earth would I, aside from the front row dads podcast listening, David Gillette, right? Are there communities like that that exists that you would tap into or, I don't. So I just happened to be, I started gaming 1985 with my dad bought his first overpriced PC and now and so it's through 2030 years now. 30 years of experience. Yeah, I know where the, where the pitfalls are. I know where the her family, but you know, there, there's unexpected ways have bad things can happen. And it's just knowing where those are that allow me to create kind of this mental parental construct that I can help navigate my kids through that world. See, I think that what you're doing is very different than what [inaudible] I've done in the past, which is just, I need time. I need space, and I'm like, go, go. Like download some apps, go here's an iPad. I'm sure the parental controls aren't set. And that's what I know. I'm not a great dad, you know, in moments like that when I'm saying I need to be more involved in what [inaudible]

Jon Vroman: [38:35](#) being consumed in my kids' life. And also it was a very interesting comment from my, my youngest,

Jon Vroman: [38:41](#) uh, is ocean, who's five and he was doing, we had some guests in town that they introduced some games to ocean, some fighting games and whatnot, right? He got really into it, really excited about it. And I was like, really? Wrestling with what's age appropriate? What's not? Is this okay? Should it be just like

no blood? No killing. Can you fight? Can you wrestle? I mean like it is it, is it senseless violence or is it like we're battling for victory and there's good guys, bad guys, all these thoughts in my head. But regardless, ocean started playing more and then they hit, the teacher got back to me and said, I noticed that his behavior is massively different at school. Like his temperaments change. He's more angry. He's frustrated with people. They're not moving fast enough for him. Right? Everything, everything he sees is a gun.

Jon Vroman: [39:31](#)

He wants to battle with everybody. And if people don't want to battle back, he's pissed. He's pissed at them. And she said, has something changed at home? And I said, yeah, we have these, this company in town. He started playing more games, blah. I explained the whole thing. She said, yeah. What I noticed with a lot of kids is there's a difference between imagination and imitation, right? That on one hand, like he was [inaudible] imitating what he was seeing and what he was experiencing versus using his imagination too, to come up with a battle on his own. Right. So where do you see the line between, especially younger kids? Yeah. Imitating what they're seeing and yet at the same time using their creative brain too. Use imagination in the game. Does that make sense? It does. And I, you know, that's why I, you know, having eight kids and being through this, I realize it's about eight years old. Yeah.

Jon Vroman: [40:23](#)

I think the iPad and the tablets are bad babysitters and so for me it's an where I can sit with an eight year old and while they're still, yeah, I understand that this was a teaching moment. I mean I understand that we're going to onboard a very structured way and they don't get frustrated that they can't do it because they started doing the crumb and this is just a digital world we all live in. But you're the pitfalls things to worry about it when they see their older siblings and fourth you, Matt are living by that. They don't get frustrated and they may get impatient or because they want to jump in. Right. Me and the 17 year old, but they know that that's coming in and they have some things to do before they can get there and so that's why I cut off a four year old. No, you can't. He can't even stand over. Yeah. Yeah. He can't read. He can't be on a tablet if you can't use a phone board games and he's, he's doing that stuff and he knows to the degree he can understand it. You know, if you, him I made, I'm going to play with

Stephen Gillett: [41:34](#)

dad. Yeah. I just say it's too young. They want to wait until 13 somebody want to do it at four but for me, eight was the, the the minimum viable.

Jon Vroman: [41:45](#) Yeah. I liked that. You've thought it through and I have respect that about you, Steven, and listen to you. Everybody's going to do it. You're going to [inaudible]. You're going to lead your family as you're going to lead your family and I totally respect that. I just think that what I'm taking from this conversation, and I'm really getting a lot of value from this and I thank you for this chat because it's really helpful for me, is to just be more intentional, right? It's the difference between just handing a kid a, a gaming system and saying, good luck, right? Leave me alone. I got stuff to do. I've got a business to build or whatever. And actually using it as a tool to connect and to have, uh, a Rite of passage into the game. Like, that's brilliant man. The Rite of passage and the gaming, you know, it's like, it's so smart and that's something that I've yet to consider and I'm, I'm an enriched because of that conversations. Thank you.

Stephen Gillett: [42:32](#) The kids respond to the ceremony in a way that

Jon Vroman: [42:35](#) grapes are mediums to the rule, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's really neat. That's super cool. Steven, I appreciate all the time here, man. I know that we're coming up against the clock here and that you've got with eight kids, lots of things to do and congrats again on the, you know, the acquisition of the company. And so many cool things to celebrate in life right now, which is wonderful is an open question here for you to just take this wherever you want. There's a bunch of guys out there listening. They all want to be great family men. They want to be family men first, right? But yet they still want to build these Epic businesses. [inaudible] all those men out there. Is there anything that you would want to say to them? Anything at all? Just lessons learned, things that have been important for you? Whatever the floor is yours

Stephen Gillett: [43:18](#) first will be marry well,

Jon Vroman: [43:21](#) yeah.

Stephen Gillett: [43:24](#) Who is, you know, there's a story in the book where no, there were, there was one period where I was almost going to be a stay at home. My secret plan in life. If I went into my boss, my wife who was a software engineer, I was it guy. She was making a few thousand dollars a year more than I was. Uh, we'd been together for since high school. As everyone now knows, and I went into my boss to resign. I say, we're going to have our first kid. Here's a nine month resignation windup and I'm going to go be a gamer. Stay at home. I love that. I love that journey. He said, well, you know, your career is just starting, why would you do that? It was hurt. And then I made the mistake of saying at

the end of that one on one and she makes \$2,000 a year more than I, and so he says, hold on, he gives me a \$3,000 raise.

Jon Vroman: [44:14](#)

[inaudible]

Stephen Gillett: [44:14](#)

that's, so I went home that night to my wife and I said, I have bad news. And she said, well, why would I said I got a rave, right. That was kind of the deciding thing. Yeah. She said, that's fine. You stay working. I'll stay at home. Uh, and then every major decision in my life, career, family, travel, investment, entrepreneur, endeavor, my wife Aisha is my copilot and my, and my sounding board without her. And I'm not and I would still be in Oregon, you know, in Eugene, worried about, you know, how many, how big my subwoofers were in my car, what kind of, what kind of rims I had on my arm, you to be somewhere in that world with her done an extraordinary amount of things we never thought possible. So my first advice to the guys up there is marry. Well number two would be be involved in your community even if you don't think you have the time.

Stephen Gillett: [45:08](#)

I also share the parks and rec committee in our town. I'm an elected member of our homeowners association. I run almost single handling of the town picnic. Thousands of people that live in our community. People say, how do you have eight kids and three dogs and three cats and start a company and be the chair of the parks and rec committee. How do you do all that? I find the time, right? I don't watch a lot of sports, you know, I'm not, I'm not a big sports guy anymore. I want to see having been a college athlete, university of Oregon ducks, a football player, and I make the time because the connection around you as a dad, as a father, as a man, as a man in society, it's only going to enrich who you are and your other precincts. So you know, if I have a great day at work, I'm usually a better dad at home.

Stephen Gillett: [45:54](#)

I'm usually a better volunteer in my community if I have a bad day at work, like the other suffer as well. So be sensitive and aware. That's a whole you is not just who you are in any one situation. It's the aggregate of all the experiences and situations you put yourself in, which means you have to get involved in things that you would otherwise not get involved with and volunteer and that will enrich other parts of your life. If my life is only Testament, it's that being a great dad, a great husband, a great father, great uncle, a community member, a business executives, they're all interconnected. Don't try to compartmentalize and say, well, I'll be a great dad, but I won't be a great volunteer. I'll be a great volunteer, but I won't be a great business person. Figure out what that whole U looks like

and come up with a plan in 2020 and beyond to take some steps in that direction.

- Stephen Gillett: [46:43](#) It's not like you have to go from being none of those on Friday to everything on Monday. Right? Figure out a way to breadcrumb and expand those experiences into your life. And then lastly, we talked about earlier when you're asked those 10 questions that I talked about earlier, like do you feel like you can answer those in a way that you're proud of? And if you have a sibling or a parent or a friend that you wish you would have connected with or reached out to, attenuated from your faith and you happen to be a person of faith, go fix those to the best you can. Go call that person you have on call, go show up at your brother or sister's house. Even talked to him. Uh, right. Your mom or dad, if they're still around, uh, a note and tell them how much you appreciate them. Make sure you get date nights, and even if you can't fit them into your calendar, find a way. Like, don't let those other parts of your life suffer. [inaudible] and on that journey, make sure that when you're in their proverbial way, ask those 10 questions, you'll say, Hey, I mean, I haven't been perfect. No, none of us are. I may not have been able to answer all those questions, but man, I took a good shot at, it'd be in my best self and I think that would be my advice.
- Jon Vroman: [47:53](#) Wow. Steven, thanks for being with us today, man, and thanks for just being, uh, being real, uh, sharing some stories with us and all of this and I look forward to more, man. Thanks. Thanks for bringing a eight humans into the world and thanks for being a man of integrity and honor because, uh, we need it. You know, we need everybody to do their part and so really, uh, appreciate this conversation and I learned a lot from it, so thank you.
- Stephen Gillett: [48:17](#) Thank you. And thank you. Your listeners also put my email address in the book so anyone who wants to email me and ask questions or anything, feel free to do so. And the happy new year to you and your listeners and I hope we can connect again. Maybe the next book will be a kid's book.
- Jon Vroman: [48:30](#) Let's, let's talk about that man. That's a, that's on the roster for me to be fun to have somebody to chat about it with. Where, where should people go find you Steven. We'll link to everything in the, in the notes of course at front row dads. But if they wanted to go direct, where can they connect with you?
- Stephen Gillett: [48:44](#) Um, you can check with me on LinkedIn. If folks are business oriented, you connect with me on Twitter. I'm at Steven's lab

with a pH. You can email me SV to SB at [inaudible] dot org it's email address in the book that actually dropped right into my inbox note, no middleman so to say. So there's several ways to get in touch with me. Pretty prolific online. And if you happen to be a water Warcraft gamer, Overwatch or fortnight, you can't try to connect with me in the game, but you may get, you may get an arrow somewhere you don't want.

Jon Vroman: [49:16](#)

That's so great man. There is no better way to end this show than that. That is perfect. That is so great. All right Steven. Happy new year to you too man and thanks again for being a guest.

Stephen Gillett: [49:27](#)

All right, take care.

Speaker 3: [49:30](#)

Hey guys, if you haven't already done so, go right now to front row dads.com/facebook and join the conversation that's happening right now on line. We designed this group for guys who are entrepreneurial in their thinking that are high performing guys with low egos. We're looking for the dads that believe in teaching their kids how to think, solve problems and be real leaders. We're looking for guys who believe in being family, men with businesses, not businessmen with families. We're looking for the fathers who have great knowledge but also believe that they have so much more to learn and we're looking for men who want to add value by sharing their wisdom. And those that are willing to ask the questions that we all need and want answers to. That's front row dads.com/facebook or simply go to Facebook, type in front row dads and you'll get to our group and what we put in there, links to all the podcasts and videos and other resources that you can't get access to anywhere else except for in this group. We to give you the best ideas to help you with your marriage, balancing work and family life communication strategies with your spouse and also your children, travel ideas and even suggestions on the latest gear that would save you time and help you be more effective. We've got updates on upcoming events and so much more. Go right now to front row dads.com/facebook and join the conversation. I'll look forward to connecting with you there.

Speaker 4: [50:58](#)

[inaudible].